

I hereby certify that this  
is a true and correct copy.

Linda Rickens Schellhammer  
Linda Rickens Schellhammer  
City Clerk

FINAL REPORT  
AND  
PROPOSED  
HOME RULE CHARTER  
OF THE  
CITY OF ALTOONA  
GOVERNMENT STUDY COMMISSION  
JULY 21, 2014

SUBMITTED BY THE GOVERNMENT STUDY COMMISSION TO THE CITY CLERK

8/28/14

## **BALLOT QUESTION**

The following ballot question and plain English statement will be placed on the ballot

November 4, 2014, for your approval:

### **ALTOONA HOME RULE REFERENDUM**

SHALL THE HOME RULE CHARTER CONTAINED IN THE REPORT, DATED JULY 21, 2014, OF THE GOVERNMENT STUDY COMMISSION, PREPARED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE HOME RULE CHARTER AND OPTIONAL PLANS LAW, BE ADOPTED BY THE CITY OF ALTOONA?

A "YES" VOTE MEANS THAT YOU ARE VOTING TO ADOPT THE PROPOSED HOME RULE CHARTER FOR THE CITY OF ALTOONA, WHICH WILL CHANGE THE EXISTING FORM OF GOVERNMENT. A "NO" VOTE MEANS YOU FAVOR RETENTION OF THE PRESENT FORM OF CITY GOVERNMENT.

YES

NO

TO: THE CITIZENS OF THE CITY OF ALTOONA

On December 19, 2012 the City of Altoona, due to its distressed financial status, adopted an Act 47 Plan. One recommendation of the Act 47 Plan was that the City consider impaneling a Government Study Commission to study the City's current form of government.

On May 21, 2013, two out of three City of Altoona voters elected to create a Government Study Commission. The Commission was given the responsibility to study the City's existing form of government and to determine whether the City would be better served under a Home Rule Charter form of government.

After fifteen months of study and research, the Commission concluded that the adoption of a Home Rule Charter form of government would significantly improve the City's ability to meet the needs and expectations of its citizens.

Presented herewith are the Commission's Final Report and Proposed Home Rule Charter. The Charter retains the best features of the City's present form of government, while establishing a new government structure highlighted by:

- The continuation of professional city management
- A full-time Mayor to work on behalf of the City
- The flexibility necessary to create a more equitable tax system for City residents

The question of adopting the proposed Charter will appear on the ballot in the form set forth on the preceding page at the general election on November 4, 2014. Every citizen of Altoona is encouraged to review this Final Report and Charter so that their vote will be an informed one.

For the specific reasons set forth in detail in the following Report, which includes the proposed Home Rule Charter, we submit that the adoption of this Charter is in the best interests of the future of the City of Altoona. Therefore, we recommend that the citizens of Altoona vote to adopt the proposed Home Rule Charter on November 4, 2014.

Respectfully submitted,  
City of Altoona Government Study Commission

Wayne Hippo, Chairman  
Richard Fiore Jr., Vice-Chairman  
David Duncan  
Richard Flarend  
Beverly Green  
Robert Kutz

# GOVERNMENT STUDY COMMISSION

## CITY OF ALTOONA

Elected May 21, 2013

### Elected Members

	Wayne Hippo, Chairman	
	Richard Fiore Jr., Vice-Chairman	
David Duncan	Richard Flarend	Beverly Green
Heather Eckels		Robert Kutz

City Solicitor  
Larry Clapper, Esq.

City Clerk/Recording Secretary for the Commission  
Linda Rickens Schellhammer

City Council Liaisons  
Councilman Dave Butterbaugh & Councilman Michael Haire

### FINAL REPORT

#### Overview of Home Rule

The hallmark of Home Rule is that it permits a municipality to tailor the structure and operations of municipal government to fit the specific needs of the community.

Under a Home Rule Charter, a municipality need no longer look to the State Legislature to structure its government, but instead, may create its own form of government, which may operate in a manner not specifically limited by state law. This form of self-government permits a municipality to create a government that will be responsive to the specific and unique needs of the community and its citizens.

The City of Altoona's Government Study Commission was charged under the Home Rule and Optional Plans Law with the following responsibilities: (a) to study the City's existing form of government; (b) to compare the City's form of government with other available forms of government under the law of the Commonwealth; (c) to determine whether the government of the City can be strengthened, made more clearly responsible or accountable to the people; and (d) to determine whether its operation could become more economical or efficient under a changed form of government.

Having fulfilled these responsibilities, the Commission has drafted a proposed Home Rule Charter. The Commission submits this Charter which will not only improve and strengthen City government, but also will make the City more accountable and responsive to the specific needs of the citizens of Altoona.

## Study Process

Representatives, both elected and appointed, of different types of Home Rule municipalities appeared before the Commission to offer input. Initially, the Commission considered whether the Third Class City Code and Optional Plan Law should continue to be Altoona's basic governmental authority or whether to draft a Home Rule Charter. The Commission listened to current and former Altoona officials explain the function and operation of City government. Public hearings were held for citizen input. The Commission studied the provisions of many different Home Rule Charters to enhance its study.

## Decisions

As a result of its studies, the Commission determined the government of the City of Altoona would be strengthened, made more responsive and accountable to the people, and that the operation of City government would become more efficient, and have a greater voice in Harrisburg among similar municipalities under Home Rule. As such, the Commission voted on July 21, 2014, to recommend that the City cease operating under the Third Class City Code and Optional Plan Law and draft a Home Rule Charter.

## Why Home Rule for Altoona

A reading of the Charter itself will provide an in-depth understanding of the benefits of Home Rule. The following points represent several highlights of these benefits:

- The City will continue to benefit from non-elected, professional administrative and financial management.
- The City will benefit from a full time Mayor who will provide better access to the citizens and present their needs to Harrisburg on a continuing and consistent basis.
- The need for improved government accountability, flexibility, and transparency will be met.
- The City will be provided with the taxing flexibility necessary to create a more equitable tax system for City residents.
- Home Rule will allow the City to tailor both the structure and operations of City government to meet operational and functional needs.
- Term limitations will prohibit the Mayor from serving more than three (3) elective terms, thus ensuring progress through the introduction of current citizen perspective.
- The ability to amend the form of government to respond to future conditions without having to depend on the State Legislature for authority to act.

- The ability for City Council to appoint a Certified Public Accountant as City Controller.

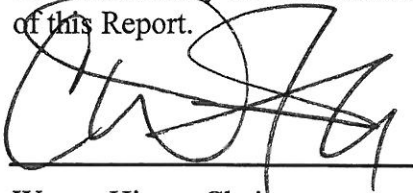
### Recommendation

The adoption of the proposed Home Rule Charter by the citizens of Altoona will, for the first time, confer upon the City all of the powers of municipal government not specifically denied to it by the Constitution or the Legislature. Therefore, rather than requiring the City of Altoona to depend upon the Pennsylvania State Legislature for each specific grant of power, as currently provided for in the Third Class City Code and Optional Plan Law, City government will be able to act more efficiently and effectively.

After fifteen months of comprehensive study, research and deliberations, twenty-six regular public meetings, and two public hearings, the members of the City of Altoona Government Study Commission voted on July 21, 2014, to recommend that the voters of the City of Altoona adopt the Home Rule Charter, as attached to this Report, at the general election to be held on November 4, 2014.

### Certification

We, the undersigned members of the City of Altoona Government Study Commission, do hereby certify that the facts set forth in this Final Report are true and correct to the best of our knowledge and that the Financial Report accurately reflects all funds, goods, materials and services used by the Commission in the performance of its work and the preparation and filing of this Report.



Wayne Hippo, Chairman



Richard Fiore Jr., Vice-Chairman



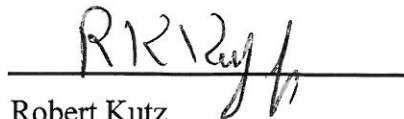
David Duncan



Beverly Green



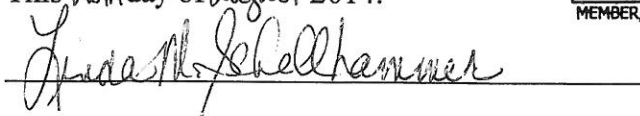
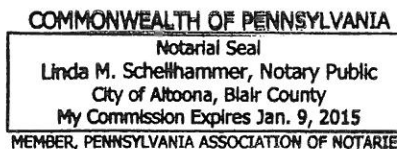
Richard Flarend



Robert Kutz

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
County of Blair

Sworn to and subscribed before me  
This 28th day of August 2014.

**FINANCIAL REPORT**  
**CITY OF ALTOONA**  
**HOME RULE STUDY COMMISSION**  
**JULY 2013 – JULY 2014**

Newspaper Advertising	\$ 959.26 (through June)
Printing (incl cost of paper, machine and staff time)	\$ 410.00 (City of Altoona) (In-kind)
Printing	\$ 214.00 (The Law Firm of Goldstein Heslop Steele Clapper Oswald & Smith) (In-kind)
Lodging	\$ 201.60
Building Rental (employee time)	\$ 120.00 (1 <sup>st</sup> public hearing) (2013) \$ 90.00 (2 <sup>nd</sup> public hearing) (2014)
Recording Secretary Expenses	\$1,467.00

Altoona City Council approved a budget of \$27,050 for 2013 and 2014 for the Government Study Commission.

The City of Altoona provided the City Solicitor services (\$7,417.50) and the use of the City of Altoona Training Facility & Council Chambers for meetings.

Penn State Altoona provided use of an auditorium for public hearings (In-kind). Penn State did however have to charge for employee time during non-operating hours.

All expenses have yet to be determined however, the expenses will fall inside budgeted expenditures.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Linda Rickens Schellhammer  
City Clerk/Recording Secretary

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